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ABSTRACT

Administrators can discover what kinds of implicit assumptions direct their personnel decisions. From this discovery they can gain a clarification that will broaden and strengthen their basis for administrative action. All too often administrators become preoccupied with the systems they develop or inherit for structuring their work, when they should be attending to the personal values, sensitivities, and characteristics of those on whom they impose their systems. By using a variation of the Role Construct Repertory Test technique called Personnel Decision Analysis, administrators contrast two sets of criteria: those they actually use when deciding which of a group of individuals to select for promotion, reassignment, or some other personnel action; and those they have formalized as the theoretical criteria that they should be using in such cases. While individual administrators find it difficult, on their own, to adjust their actually-used criteria to meet theoretical standards, interpersonal workshop experiences can help develop new interpersonal constructs that will be used on a practical basis. (Author/PGD)

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INTERPERSONAL ADMINISTRATION: OVERCOMING THE PYGMALION EFFECT*

In this paper I review some projects taking personal construct psychology to a cognitive-reflective-interactive model of administrator development. My intent is to show that administrators can discover what kinds of implicit assumptions direct their decisions and that this realization brings a clarification which--when checked out against those of their significant others and the organizational reality--broadens and strengthens the basis of administrative action. This romp in the interpersonal underworld, it seems to say, can produce results. Besides it's fun.

Interpersonal administration may be just another word for personal supervision. But supervision has always had trouble with its professional respectability. In literature as in practice it must be dressed up with exotic adjectives--democratic, developmental, and now clinical--to avoid the unprofessionality of 'snooper vision'. For a decade the word dropped out of use completely, being replaced by more respectable terms like leadership, coordination, change, intervention. Some writers tried to overcome supervision's discomforting implications by giving it new semantics: supervision is super (or superior) vision, i.e., possessing ability to see problems more acutely (the microscopic lens), more far-reaching (the telescopic lens) and more broadly (the wide-angle). But even that imaginative attempt could not shake off the humble origins: super-vise literally means over-see and professionals don't like it. Not even supervisors--note Mosher and Purple's title: Supervision: The Reluctant Profession.

It is hard to be an administrator--or study administration--and not have the same trouble with the notion of supervision. Twenty years ago, I wrote papers on 'differential supervision,' that is that supervisors should differentiate their practice the same way as do teachers: individualizing one's practice to suite the supervisee's (or pupil's) individual needs and abilities. But this notion was based on our experimental research submitting 78 student teachers to stressful evaluations and, although it more recently won praise for being the only empirical knowledge showing that supervisory conferences can have any effect, its main point was missed: to help someone is to know someone. That is interpersonal administration.

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Interpersonal administration says first that to be of help to an associate or colleague is to interact with them. It is of course what effective professionals have done all along. But they have done something more as well: they have thought about it, mulled it over, in a word--reflected upon it. Most of our recent research has been with helping administrators to clarify, through interaction and reflection, what it is they are doing with others. We do it by getting them to understand their own personal constructs and those of others. This is a cognitive process that uses those basic notions, values, sets of perceptions that guide actions: the personal constructs brought to the job. One learns of one's own personal constructs, and those of others (in this instance supervisees or colleagues) in many ways: looking at others, at self, at interactions, by talking to and otherwise interpersonally communicating with others and reflecting upon it, and sometimes by making use of some means that have been designed to facilitate this otherwise amorphous process, that is through what are called reptests. Our findings will suggest that the development of interpersonal administration is a (1) cognitive phenomenon that is a function of both (2) reflection and (3) interaction.

Myth, Metaphor and Management

What could be termed the Pygmalion effect resides in the necessity that all administrators create abstractions and the temptation to concretize them or possibly anthropomorphicize them. It is part of management, and a very high level of it too, that a superintendent, principal or director create an abstraction. They invent mechanisms, design structures, develop systems: be these called policies, rules, departments, schools or just standard procedures. What they don't invent they inherit. It is a necessary and efficient function: the reduction of realities to abstractions, the conversion from a mass of particularisms to a structure of manageable generalizations, the creation of systems of thoughts applicable across a universe of administrivia: it is the epitome of managerial creativity. Yet it is a creative function that within it bears the burden of Pygmalion, the mythical king and sculptor who reified his creation, Cyprus, ultimately falling in love with it and successfully requesting Aphrodite to turn it into a real live person. The tendency of administrators to reify (deify?) those structures they create is even stronger with those they have inherited (the legitimization of one's appointment?). In either event, they behave as though they believe organizations (invented or inherited) to have aims,

and bureaucracies to have goals that are independent of the persons comprising them. Any 3-foot shelf of current management texts, organization theory references and administration studies leaves incumbents and aspirants bedazzled with tempting anthropomorphisms, all carrying the implication that learning these enticing structures and probability paths is more promising than learning about each other. But metaphors don't manage, or get managed. People do.

The sinister side-effect of administrative creation, therefore, is not so much the reification of abstractions as the negation of experience. This may be somewhat less than the outright denial of reality but does embody the diminution of attention to direct experience. And this negation of experience (considerably more potentially disastrous than the experience of negation which for some may be the only path to the a-ha of reality; where there's death there's hope) is dangerous in both directions: to the administrator and to the administered. That is, a person responsible for complex enterprises who attends more to the process of the system of operationalizing the created structures, or patterns of norms, than to the values, sensitivities and intentions that are going on, negates the experience of those values, sensitivities and intents: both own and others'. One negates personal constructs.

Examples of administrators' negations of their administered's constructs and the means of discovering them are legion: we need no more research to remind us how administrators' preoccupations with (love affairs with?) their created systems--however important these may be--get in the way of or otherwise deny the significance of subordinates' problems. Ever get told 'Oh I wouldn't worry about that if I were you'? Rather what administrators need is a means of gaining a clarification of their own basic if inarticulated clusters of values: a realization of the ones they actually use when working with other people irrespective of the impressiveness of whatever structural creations get in the way. Administrators like both to discover and to develop their own operational priorities.

Understanding Cognitive Constructions

Impressed by the wealth of cognitive resources offered by Personal Construct Psychology, a theory of administrators-as-persons could be forgiven for beginning with a variation of the Role Construct Repertory Test (reptest) the instrument George Kelly developed to elicit personal constructs. The reptest is one of several means for getting at one's actual--albeit sometimes inarticulated--behavior determinants, or personal constructs. Originally brought out in 1955

and currently undergoing a major resurgence in interest (see Landfield 1977), personal construct psychology is widely applied: initially through clinical and personality psychology and today (see forthcoming Interchange theme number, Ritchie, 1982) in management, learning theory, curriculum, teacher training, nutrition science, personnel decisions, higher and adult education and educational administration. An individual's patterns of construing the world are his/her personal constructs. "Man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templets which he creates," said Kelly (1955, p. 9), "and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all. Let us give the name constructs to these patterns that are tentatively tried on for size. They are ways of construing the world."

Our version of reptest, innocuously called Personnel Decision Analysis, is usually a six-by-eighteen grid where the subject makes successive comparisons among known persons, writing out his significant constructs for later use in his own Likert-type "questionnaire" to yield structural heirarchies. Several in our group have used similar versions. One describes it:

> The Rep Test and personal construct theory assume that the constructs employed by an individual when perceiving an object, event, or people influence that person's behavior. The instrument gathers qualitative information, which is analysed quantitatively to reveal the subject's operative constructs. These can then be interpreted. (Rix, 1980, p. 40)

The format that asks an administrator to think of three persons he/she would recommend for first administrative promotion and three the opposite (Form PROM) is most widely used--not because promotability is a popular focus but because its recommendation is the simplest form of personnel action indicating interperson comparisons and operational criteria or values. Gaining clarification of these "operative criteria" as distinct from those posted or espoused is a means providing the administrator with an opportunity to visualize their discrepancies (if any--and there usually is). The discrepancies are between their created abstractions, ideals and principles and those that determine their actual

decisions about real people. It is this aspect--awareness of constructs in use and their possible discrepancy from those posed or presumably "believed in"--that makes the realization process unique.

Sufficient experience with the reptest has established its reliability and validity in its various forms. In a very early study, (reported in Brown 1974) I found a .78 one-week test-retest reliability coefficient in the DPRT and also noted a .74 construct correlation between its two indices termed perceptual discrimination and perceptual integration. Predictive validy can be inferred from another teacher effectiveness study (Brown 1974) where "known groups" merit-rated their teachers (using DPRT) as expected and, similarly we found concurrent validity in our comparison of 156 principals' 2,828 criteria of their teachers with those teachers' descriptions of those principals on Stogdill's Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Form 12 (Brown 1975). Constructive validy is inferred from the theoretical base of the reptest, its cognitive applicability and the cognitive focus of the workshops used in this project and content validity is implicit in format: because they are the subject's own constructs at least he knows what he means by them. In another study (1978) we noted the reptest's relative impermeability to verbal fashions, and to "faking": one subject, attempting to demonstrate an increase in his number of criteria increased only his variety of synonyms for the same criteria. Although other bases for reliability and validity are readily available (Alban-Metcalfe 1978, Fransella and Bannister 1977, Adams-Webber 1979), a strong point is that administrators just love doing it, and say so.

And why not: principals make decisions about people and our reptest begins at that point; administrators are form-fillers and reptests can oblige; whereas construct theory claims categorization is natural, for administrators it is essential; bipolarization is daily practice, finiteness marks every budget estimate and hierarchical structure is written in the handbook. Even the basic--perhaps outrageous--notion of reality as a personal construction must give the same thrill of personal challenge to the budding administrator anticipating his/her first principalship as to Pygmalion contemplating his block of marble. Less forgivable is the tacit implication that possession of this knowledge, fed back to principals through papers and publications, would effect or even could effect change in the practice of administration. Personal awareness had been bypassed.

The Self as Management Consultant

Just as Kelly sees self as scientist one can view client-as-clinician or an administrator as one's own consultant. Not so simplistic as it sounds, it requires all the will and rigor of current "researcher-as-instrument" studies, the key concept of which is that of bracketing. With bracketing (sometimes

called phenomenological suspension) one may see and describe phenomena from a variety of perspectives. There are several kinds available: of cognitive bracketing, dramaturgical bracketing and existential bracketing (Denton 1979), only the first, cognitive, is our attention at present; it refers to the conscious, intentional, intellectual act of setting aside accustomed perceptual sets and interpretive frameworks.

By asking an administrator to do something he/she does all the time anyway, e.g., consider persons (elements) whom they would/would not recommend for some specified assigment (e.g., promotion to vice-principal) in an exhaustive number of different ways (constructs), the reptest essentially forces a bracketing of reifications. The abstractions are placed or left on the shelf while we get on with the job, so that one may come upon a realization of one's own operational constructs and their hierarchical usage in real practice--their "operative criteria". At a different time and as a separate task we also have administrators do an independant rank-ordering of their constructs in their normal "posted" fashion, i.e. by talking of qualities or criteria in the abstract that "should be" upranked or downranked in practice. The clarification that comes from comparing one's posted or "should-be-sheet" priorities with those actually used--the operative priorities--is found to be personally enlightening. For some administrators this realization process of unbracketing--or taking the ideals off the shelf to compare with what we really did do--was unnerving. Earlier responses demonstrated an imaginative rejection of reality in favor of a return to the ideals, to the posted or espoused values. We discovered this to be particularly likely when using computerized scoring-processing-reporting formats. Proprietorship of constructs had been bypassed.

Time for Reflecting

This problem of the resourceful rejection of the reality of one's own decision values has become solved by the simple process of letting subjects do their own protocol processing. Let them beat computers into stubby lead pencils: ownership is a strong motivator. When a principal can say "Like it or not, it's mine" the next question will be "What can I do about it?"

This is the point at which cognitive reflection and peer interaction seem indicated. Boyd (1981, p. 104) uses reflection as "a logical, non-logical, analytic and creative process in which the learner views and re-views an event in relation to self." Her work identifies an entire structure of 11 themes of reflecting, at least some of which were used in these studies. Her structure: conditions for reflecting: time, attitude. Activities of reflecting: attending, control, unkown, elusiveness, clarifying, perspective-taking, incorporating, confirming, resolving.

The Power of Interpersonal Constructs

Administrators can learn their actual constructs, the ones they use when carrying out dozens of personnel decisions daily, and the cathectic investment develops a sense of their ownership to the point that they grow, change, reorganize. But a couple of curious findings dangled before me. First, with an N of 69: school principals working with us (Brown, Rix, Cholvat, 1982) were reflecting on their operative criteria for recommending colleagues for promotion and, armed with an awareness of their own criteria rankings, actually raised the power of one construct--rapport with the community--from 19th to 9th, or from minus 2 sigmas to plus one-half. That's not surprising: a national movement to clean up the curriculum is centered in that community and the realization of this construct's low operational status effected a conscious change. But in how many persons? Frequency of usage of this construct over that same 8-month period rose not at all, being used only 1.6% each time, i.e., by the same persons. So much for do-it-yourself development: no interaction had been provided, no interpersonal searchings were allowed. Similarly with the second finding with an N of one: an administrator who had worked with me some years before, when learning how Bob Parry (1978) found effective-rated principals to be those with the greater number of available criteria (cognitive complexity), went home and did his over. Compared with his 5-year-old protocol, his new one, he reported shamefacedly, had achieved a startling increase in synonyms--but the same number of constructs. Yes, he did it by himself. There is more than cognition in construct acquisition just as there is more than mechanisms in management.

Developing Interpersonal Values

That the making of critical constructs in administrators must be approached from interpersonal theory should be expected: Kelly's basic foldout grids demanded successive interperson comparisons, disclosing the tacit assumption that personal constructs are of interpersonal origins. Yet the cognitive starkness of his 11 corollaries posts a theory so bereft of interpersonal dynamics that writers feel compelled to rise to the defence. Mine is not one such: it is barely an attempt at conceptual justification for what was discovered.

If the first bracketing was called conceptual the second could be called dramaturgic: the interinvolvement of persons with each other and their constructs. As the second bracket is interpersonal, the first was intrapersonal: as personality grows through reflected appraisals from significant others, constructs grow through

the first bracket wherein one gains realization through cathecting one's own structured pattern of constructs-in-use as compared with those posted or stated as abstractions or ideals (well, isn't self the most 'significant' other?). The second or dramaturgic phase takes several forms: (1) interactive structured workshops comparing protocols under studyguide questions as with 40 east coast principals whose teacher selection behaviour became more goal-directed (Brown 1978), (2) 'musical triads' or small groups rotating each other's sets of protocols and shouldbesheets as with the 11 northern school trustees that some of our group worked with to develop superintendent selection criteria, and (3) a combination of the first two on an intensive 4-week live-in experience where would-be principals were brought to an understanding of critical administrative variables (Rix and Parry 1982).

The discovery from these examples is that the interpersonal development of constructs develops interpersonal constructs. Or, to take it more slowly, it seems that the substantive content of the evaluative criteria that became worked up and agreed upon during interpersonal workshop experiences, was itself a content that could be thought of as of more discriminative on values that--for organizational life--ought to be more relevant: interpersonal values. Whence my term interpersonal administration: that pattern of administrative action that makes possible the development of productive interaction skills.

Intensity of Interaction

Not yet fully analysed are results from a year-long project of three different groups of 10 administrators and hopefuls (see Table). Each step in the above was carried out and corroborated. That is, each step in the then-emerging cognitive-reflective-interactive model for administrative development was in place: (1) before-and-after use of reptests, (2) personal protocol processing, (3) personal and group reflecting, (4) posted-operative contrasting (i.e., prioritized abstractions of ideals against prioritized elicited criteria-in-use), (5) comparisons of self-other, self-group, group-group and the (6) rotating triads. They demonstrated the same interest-confusion-insight-judgment sequence. This time however they produced (7) individually written analyses based both on the quantitative data and on the workgroup experience. This latter revealed the presence of some sort of principle of interpersonal dynamics, something perhaps obvious that should have been looked for but never had. It is this: it is as though the intensity of cathexis, or affect investment, between persons was transferred to the evaluative criteria or organizational values acquired jointly between them.

The intensity of interaction--weak or strong--seemed to confer a joint proprietorship upon the organizational values so developed, and that proprietorship was as strong or as weak to each individual as the strength or weakness of the affective bond developed between them.

No statistical measure of interaction intensity is available. It should have been but so should have some expectancy: such are the realities of researchers' behavior. Like the Pygmalionized administrator, we erect elaborate mechanisms based on celebrated abstractions and see reality only when the so-called subjects talk back.

The effect of intensity of human sociality however is still to be determined. The discussion here refers to the cognitive task of clarifying administrative values, goals and criteria. Whether enhancing interaction intensity will generalize to other administrative tasks conjurs up provocative possibilities. Certainly the written self-change analyses of those subjects who inferred personal criteria change from intensity of human sociality did so only with reference to clearly substantive topics like administrative problems. But I also know a lot of them would knock off to Rudi's for a beer afterwards.

Is it possible for an administrator deliberatly to create a cognitive-reflective-interactive model of organizational behavior? Or by so doing, does one run the risk of building another personless abstraction and loving it into a paper-life. It may be better to look more acutely at what life is already there. Existence preceeds essence.

Two points however seem clear. One is its significance for administrative decisions: Rix (1981) points to the importance of discussion of any emerging operative criteria and poses the question, "These represent the ares; do we agree they should be the oughts?" The other implication of interpersonal administration, particularly when strengthened by the significance of the intensity of human sociality, is the stark fact that there is a network. The corporate subjectivity is real: we do not hide it behind administrative abstractions however democratic they may sound, but rather attempt to articulate the idiosyncratic and recognize its power. "Perhaps person comparisons are the basic stuff of organization," surmises Parry (1982) and goes on, "If so, school systems, with their paramount concern for people change, reflect most the all pervasive nature of subjective judgment as ultimate discriminator of effectiveness."

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TABLE OF SHIFTING CONSTRUCTS

This table of tentative data gives changes, over a three-month period, of the frequency with which each of the three groups' constructs that were used to describe persons whom they had recommended for administrative promotion were classified by themselves under these 20 categories; decision power, or dynamic strength of each construct's contribution to the decision, is NOT tablulated here.

OPERATIVE CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION	GROUP A N=10 *frequency of usage*			GROUP B N=10 *frequency of usage*			GROUP C N=10 *frequency of usage*		
	PRE	POST	DIFF.	PRE	POST	DIFF.	PRE	POST	DIFF.
INDIVIDUALITY									
101 Dynamic Personality	6	5	-1	18	13	-5	11	15	4
102 Emotional Stability	8	7	-1	5	10	5	5	4	-1
103 Self-Others Orientation	8	3	-5	8	14	6	7	4	-3
104 Sociability, Friendly	3	6	3	12	4	-8	10	8	-2
105 Age and Appearance	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	0
106 Sex and Marital Status	0	4	4	0	0	0	4	0	-4
COGNITIVE SKILLS									
201 Decision Making Skills	5	4	-1	4	5	1	4	2	-2
202 Perceptive, Intelligent	8	7	-1	3	8	5	5	2	-3
RAPPORT WITH									
301 Students (or sub. staff)	3	0	-3	10	5	-5	16	7	-9
302 Teachers (or colleagues)	2	3	1	7	9	2	4	2	-2
303 Administration (or goals)	7	7	0	7	9	2	13	3	-10
304 Community	0	0	0	4	4	0	3	7	4
LEADERSHIP QUALITIES									
401 Leadership Ability	14	10	-4	9	8	-1	13	13	0
402 Organizing Ability	5	6	1	15	13	-2	7	14	7
403 Innovative, Flexible	9	3	-6	16	15	-1	6	13	7
PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES									
501 Profnl. Knowledge, Growth	0	5	5	7	8	1	2	8	6
502 Professional Experience	1	6	5	5	5	0	5	6	1
503 Communication Skills	2	3	1	3	8	5	1	1	0
504 Commitment and Drive	7	7	0	17	15	-2	5	11	6
505 Teaching Effectiveness	2	4	2	10	7	-3	3	4	1
Average number of categories used (cognitive complexity)	7.2	9.6	+2.4	9.4	11.3	+1.9	9.1	10.1	+1.0
Characterizations of Development Direction: i.e., despite their similar beginnings, each group developed (almost predictably) by mode of "treatment"	*became more reflective; more concerned with the dynamics of organizations*			*became more affective-oriented; more "cozy interpersonalizing"*			*became more cognitive and responded as "administrative straights"*		